

# PROFILE OF THE MERCANTILE OLIGARCHY IN THE MID-RANGE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN THE KINGDOM OF ARAGON: THE AVINCACEZ FAMILY FROM BARBASTRO (HUESCA) IN THE 14<sup>TH</sup> AND 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

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## ABSTRACT

Prior to its extinction due to the Disputation of Tortosa, the city of Barbastro had a Jewish community about three hundred inhabitants. Within that community, there was a large body of *negotiators* who dealt with the movement of capital, the clothing trade for domestic consumption, and the trade of equine cattle (donkeys, mules and nags) which was essential for the transport of goods. Their credit *hinterland* coincided with the area of influence of the annual fair. In that context, the Avincacez lineage constituted a paradigm of the ruling classes' business mentality of the Jewish quarter. This lineage was represented by three members: Durán, Nicim and Haym who were specialists in the textile business (drapers).<sup>1</sup>

## KEY WORDS

Barbastro (Huesca, Spain), Avincacez, Merchants, Jewish Community.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Barbastrum (Osca, Hispania), Avincacez, Mercatores, Iudaeorum Communitas.

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1. This article is part of a research project with the sponsorship of The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture of New York. Used abbreviations: ACA, Archivo de la Corona de Aragón; ADB, Archivo Diocesano de Barbastro; AHN, Archivo Histórico Nacional; AHPH, Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Notariales de Huesca; AHProv.Z, Archivo Histórico Provincial de Zaragoza; AHPT, Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Notariales de Tarazona; AMB, Archivo Municipal de Barbastro.

## 1. Introduction

This study is based on more than four hundred documents, most of them are economic and are dated from 1390-1415 (when the community disappears). These documents are from the Municipal Archive of Barbastro, the Ecclesiastical Archive of Barbastro, the Provincial Historical Archive of Huesca, and the Crown of Aragon Archive. Some of these documents are inquisitorial trials from the Archivo Provincial de Zaragoza (Provincial Historical Archive of Saragossa).<sup>2</sup>

Situated in the north-eastern Aragon, Barbastro was considered a “second-range” city.<sup>3</sup> It had a steady population around 2,000 inhabitants,<sup>4</sup> which means around 400 homes.<sup>5</sup> Barbastro was also the home of a restless Jewish community since the beginning of the Islamic period. The city had eleven public notaries<sup>6</sup> which is an indication of the economic dynamism of a town with a large rural hinterland. Barbastro was located in a strategic spot that connected Eastern lands and Catalonia with the Southern part of the Kingdom of Aragon and the Castilian border on the west.

As for the population of minorities, the notary’s protocols collected 36 Mudejar men between 1401 and 1415 while the Jewish population consisted of 190 adults between 1390 and 1415; that is five times bigger. The Mudejar quarter comprised 12 homes<sup>7</sup> according to the tax counting, that means that the Jewry comprised 65 homes (in other words, 260-295 people) if we apply the same ratio. Moreover, if we compare the *monedaje* (old tax in the Crown of Aragon) of the year 1414 —Jews were exempt to pay that tax— which identified 363 tax units to the counting of 1451, when the tax units raised to 494 units —including new converts—, we can establish that in just four decades the population had increased in 131 adults (400-525 people). That means that 70-75% of the Jews<sup>8</sup> were baptized. If we look at the extraordinary subsidies accrued in the first third of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (1332-1335),

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mainly for military campaigns, Barbastro ranked sixth on a total of seventeen Jewish communities belonging to the Crown.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Historical Context

The progenitor of the lineage was contemporary of the attack of Bertrand du Guesclin's army. The king tried to mitigate damage with fiscal measures (1366-1370). During five years, the king allocated half of the taxes coming from the horse business.<sup>10</sup> The spreading fire affected the *domus oracionis*, interior homes and the vicinity of the Zuda —*extra Çudam intus et existencium*— where the Jewish quarter was located. In this regard, the king Pedro IV (1368) prohibited jurors to use the stones from the arches of the synagogue —*lapides archorum ipsius sinagoge*— to repair the walls and moats.<sup>11</sup> That did not prevent a continuous flow of migrants, as it was endorsed in royal order to protect the rights of foreign Jews to settle down there.<sup>12</sup>

The Avincacez family also lived the changes unleashed in the summer of 1391 by *malfeitores e criminales* [troublemakers and criminals], being confined in the Zuda<sup>13</sup> under the protection of the Governor.<sup>14</sup> Once again, their neighbours had to retreat to higher trims neighbourhoods protected by the Muslim fortress<sup>15</sup> due to the bombing by Count de Foix's troops in 1395. In 1398, the justice and the judges ensured the integrity of the Jewry and its inhabitants. For that purpose, a new tax was generated and it would attend the costs of the army. That can be seen in the records of Royal Heritage for the period 1399-1405. The amount was 200 *sueldos* [monetary unit] per year.<sup>16</sup> No forced conversions can be appreciated

9. Sánchez Martínez, Manuel. "La fiscalidad catalanoaragonesa y las aljamas de judíos en la época de Alfonso IV (1327-1336): los subsidios extraordinarios". *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Medievalia*, 3 (1983): 133-139 (tables V-VIII).

10. Escribá, Gemma, ed. *The Jews in the Crown of Aragon. Regesta of the Cartas Reales in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón. Part. II: 1328-1493*, Jerusalem: Ginzei Am Olam, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, 1995: 230 (doc. No. 1165).

11. Riera i Sans, Jaume. *Els poders públics i les sinagogues. Segles XIII-XV*, Girona: Patronat Municipal Call de Girona-Centre Bonastruc Ça Porta, 2006: 363-364 (doc. No. 168).

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13. Cabañero Subiza, Bernabé. "Notas para la reconstrucción de la ciudad islámica de Barbastro (Huesca)". *Somontano*, 5 (1995): 29; Betrán, Abadía. *La forma de la ciudad. Las ciudades de Aragón en la Edad Media*. Saragossa: Colegio de Arquitectos de Aragón, 1992: 256.

14. Baer, Fritz. *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien. Aragon und Navarra*. Berlin: Veröffentlichungen der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Historische Sektion, 1929: I, 677 (doc. No. 424) and Roth, Norman. "1391 in Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia and Majorca". *Iberia Judaica*, 3 (2011): 49-75.

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as it happened in other similar communities, though the capital market was momentarily paralyzed.<sup>17</sup>

The extinction of the Jewry occurred because of the Disputation of Tortosa, producing the turning point in February to June 1414. The *adelantados* Lop Comparat and Haym Gacenyó held their jobs until mid November<sup>18</sup> when a hundred twenty of the most influential families converted in Calatayud, Daroca, Fraga and Barbastro.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in April 19<sup>th</sup> 1415, we have evidence that a thousand Jews from Lleida, Tamarite, Fraga, and Daroca were baptized whilst *magna pars ville Barbastri*.<sup>20</sup>

So just a week later,<sup>21</sup> after establishing that *iudei olim in eadem villam commorantes, divina gratia mediante, sunt ad fidem Christi orthodoxam conversi*, Benedict XIII consecrated the synagogue into a church under the invocation of San Salvador. Nowadays, the shrine of Esperanza still remains. Close to it, some ceramic fragments of a *hanukkiyah*<sup>22</sup> have been found. Benedict XIII also enabled an adjacent plot as a cemetery.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Gracia de Santáγγελ's will, dated in 1418, wanted her grave to be *en la yglesia de Sant Salvador de la poblacion de los cristianos nuevos*<sup>24</sup> to be managed by a brotherhood of converts to celebrate Mass on Saturday, keeping the original building elements such as rabbi's chair and the Torah Ark, until the Inquisition<sup>25</sup> banned her will.

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22. Motis, Miguel Ángel. "La judería de Barbastro y el hallazgo de unos fragmentos de *Hanukkiyah*...": 28-41.

23. Cuella, Ovidio. *Bulario Aragonés de Benedicto XIII. La curia de Peñíscola (1412-1423)*. Saragossa: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2005: 276-277 (doc. No. 569).

24. "In the church of San Salvador in the location of the New Christians": Sauco Álvarez, María Teresa. "Alma y patrimonio en el acto de testar. Análisis de los testamentos notariales bajomedievales de Barbastro (Huesca)". *Segundo Simposio Internacional de Jóvenes Medievalistas*. Murcia: Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales, 2006: 219.

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### 3. Social-Professional Profiles

Jewish societies were often articulated in three levels of wealth or *manos*. They were subjected to the tax splits. Intangible criteria such as prestige, age, descendants, erudition or belonging to a client network was not taking into account. Instead, their tax liability was only considered. In this regard, it is very illustrative the inventory of those goods confiscated by the Inquisitorial tax collector to those converts convicted of heresy. It is indicative of the perception of existing wealth at that time by means of defining five categories: a group whose wealth is *arto riqua*, an upper middle section that *tiene bien en que bevir y buenas posesiones*, a majority that *tiene razonable hazienda*, a vulnerable group (due to illness, old age, orphanage...) that *apenas tiene en que pasar su vida*; y those who lived from charity because they were *muy desamparados y pobres*.<sup>26</sup>

It is complex to identify people from the highest social stratum. However, the assembly held in the synagogue in 1397 gives us some clues. We have a census tract composed of 7,200 *sueldos* (300 florins) at 8.3% rate of interest.<sup>27</sup> In this deed, we count almost thirty main *paterfamilias* [husbands] with their wives as guarantors, which means that the wives had greater financial resources: the broker Haym Ambrón and his wife Luna, the *adelantado* Haym Avincohen, the *adelantado* Haym Gatenyo and his wife Bella, the official receiver (liquidator) Salamón Abnuba and his wife Bella, the draper Salamón Comparat and his wife Oro, the draper Jucef Comparat and his wife Bella, the merchant Salamón de Fraym and his wife Sol, the merchant Lop Comparat and his wife Mira, Salamón [...] and his family, Simuel Ataz and his wife Benguda, Jehudá Rimov, Astruch Yriza and his wife Astruga, the rabbi Abraham Rimov, the young Açach Comparat and his wife Estrella, Salamón Sanoga, the merchant Jehudá Sanoga and his wife Bonadona, the elderly Haym Gallipapa and his wife Cidiella, Salamón Gatenyo and his wife Rebeca, the young draper and liquidator Baruch Comparat and his wife Tolosana, the physician Açach Comparat and his wife Oro, the draper and liquidator Nicim Avincacez and his wife Mira, the physician and liquidator Lop Comparat, Abraham [...] and [...], León Cofe, Sessa Avizmel and his wife Sol, the physician Jacob Comparat, the draper Haym Avincacez and his wife Duenya, the merchant Menahem Abnuba and his wife Jamila.<sup>28</sup>

26. "That has a good place to live and fine possessions"; "that has a considerable fortune"; "that they hardly survive"; "very poor and helpless". Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. "El linaje de los Santángel de Aragón: mentalidad y estructura socio-económica". *Aragón. Sefarad*. Saragossa: Ibercaja-Diputación de Zaragoza, 2005: 283-287. According to the tax planning in Huesca 1389 *ho flaco, ho decaydo por la hedat grande* ("weak or disable by his old age") also miserable and chronic sick people were exempt from paying taxes as well as those who depended on their jobs earning less than four dineros per day. Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. "Régimen fiscal de las comunidades judías de Aragón en la Baja Edad Media: la aljama de Huesca en el siglo XIV". *Homenaje a Alfonso García Gallo*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995: 2/1, 346.

27. It was about to get a better rate of interest. In that sense, the repayment of 100 of 1,000 *sueldos* per year done by some noblemen from the Jewry such as Salamón Abnuba, Nizim Avincacez, Jucef Comparat, Jacob Comparat and Baruch Comparat son, to Salvador Bernat (one of their creditors) neighbour of Barbastro, was reduced 1.7%. AHPH, Monasterio de Sigüenza, S-27/11.

28. AMB, Sección de Pergaminos, n. 5/1. Publication in Fantova, Laura, ed. *Memoria Histórica del Somontano de Barbastro*, Barbastro: Comarca del Somontano de Barbastro, 2007: 178-181 (doc. No. 347).



Though some of them were physicians, the vast majority were merchants. According to the council meeting held in July 1412, this economic profile was similar to the Christian elite families (Bernat, Bielsa, Boyl, Castillon, Ferriz, Pueyo, Palacio), most of them noblemen, at a moment when the converts were not yet in the scene (Santángel, Lunel, Díez and Ram) which claimed to be merchants.<sup>29</sup> We know the occupations of 40% of the neighbors by the mid-fifteenth century, so it is not anecdotal that the biggest group was composed by merchants. There were thirty-one traders. Santángel, Bielsa, Bernat and Bardaxí can also be considered as merchants. This group had the main fortunes. 54% of the taxpayers of the first four *manos* were related to commercial activities.<sup>30</sup> The tax counts established a scale of ten *manos*.

Barbastro was a city that combined a strong commercial vocation with clothes manufacturing and a strong agricultural component. Consequently, the work activities were not especially sophisticated. Thus, we find up to 24 different occupations among 141 adult Christians: merchants, lawyers, notaries, butchers, barbers, carders, bag-makers, weavers, millers, carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, farmers (17%) —no matter if they had small or medium size farming land—, cartwrights, bakers, archers, shoemakers, innkeepers, dyers, veterinarians, spice-dealers, dress-makers, dressers and brokers.<sup>31</sup>

The weavers and carders were the poorest groups. According to the number registered in the census of taxpayers, without mentioning the people who worked part-time or female labour in domestic workshops, there were six workshops on textile manufacturing at full capacity during the mid-fifteenth century. Unfortunately, the poor implementation of dyers and launderettes by the city council made the final products to be finished in Huesca and Lleida,<sup>32</sup> aimed at local or regional demand. Only plain clothes were produced and dyed in the marketplace.<sup>33</sup>

We have only identified the occupations of half of the Jews registered in the census. The Jewish artisans worked mainly on the textile industry handling wool clothes: weavers (5%), carders (1.5%) —or in dressmaking (23%)— and manufacturing leather and footwear —leather sellers (6.5%), shoemakers (20%). In opposition, the Mudejar population chose the metallurgical and building sectors, followed by tile-makers, pots-and-pans makers, jug makers and shoe-makers.<sup>34</sup> Except for the shoe-makers, the Mudejars did not have rivalry<sup>35</sup> in these jobs. Although the Mudejar economy was at the service of the dominant groups and the Christian oligarchies, we can notice a productive complementation among these two minorities as shown in the table below. This characteristic of complementation was shared in cities such

29. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. "La población de Barbastro...": 144.

30. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. "La población de Barbastro...": 148.

31. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. "La población de Barbastro...": 147.

32. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1391, f. 24r.

33. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. "La población de Barbastro...": 149.

34. Conte Cazcarro, Ánchel. *La aljama de moros de Barbastro*. Barbastro: Fundación Ramón J. Sender, 2013: 52.

35. Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. "Relaciones transversales entre judíos y Mudejares en Aragón en la Baja Edad Media: asimetría, interacción productiva y flujos crediticios". *e-Journal of Sefardic Studies*, 2 (2014): 101-127 <<http://www.sefarad-studies.org/Contents%2D2.html>> (Consulted 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016).



as Daroca or Calatayud which was an element of social and political stability in the Jewish communities that would break with the emergence of the converts.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 1. Employment structure of Jewish and Mudejar Minority of Barbastro**

Sector	Occupation	Jews	Mudejars
Clay	Tile-maker, Pots-and-pans maker, Jug maker	--	8.0%
Trade	Broker	3.2%	--
	Merchant and/or draper	24.2%	12.0%
Building sector	Quicklime maker	--	1.0%
	Carpenter	--	8.0%
	General contractor	--	12.0%
Metal	Silver worker	1.6%	--
	Boilermaker	--	8.0%
	Locksmith	--	5.0%
	Blacksmith	--	26.0%
Others	Oiler/Soap maker	--	2.0%
	Butcher	3.2%	--
	Farmer	1.6%	--
	Miller	--	7.0%
Leather/Shoes	Furrier/Carder	8.1%	--
	Shoemaker	19.3%	10.0%
Health	Physician (Doctor/Surgeon)	11.3%	--
Textile	Tailor	22.6%	--
	Weaver	4.9%	1.0%

36. Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. "La comunidad judía y conversa de Daroca (Zaragoza) en el siglo XV: refundación, vida cotidiana y círculos de sociabilidad". *Hispania. Revista de Historia*, 76 (2016): 636-639.



Among the most widespread Jewish activities, it highlights the drapers (24%). Drapers were merchants dedicated to the commercialization of clothing;<sup>37</sup> many belonged to the ruling class. It is true that most of the transactions were a small scale within the local area, without being involved in the interregional circuits. Referred to what we described above about dressmaking workshops, the quality of drapery was medium or low. It targeted domestic consumption rather than exportation. The rivalry of foreign clothing<sup>38</sup> was really influential. Indeed, the reputation of this significant sector is highlighted in the documentation of the notary Domingo-Ferrer who reserved a *Protocollo de las cartas de los judios mercaderes de la ciudat de Barbastro*<sup>39</sup> each financial year.

Within this group, there is a specific profile: the “merchants of beasts” that controlled the trade and rent of equines, like in neighboring town of Jaca.<sup>40</sup> This group was strategic for the transportation of goods and people and also for agricultural tasks. In doing so, they contributed to the enrichment of four of the most important families of the Jewish community, such as the omnipresent Comparats, the Yrizas, the Sanogas and the Abnubas, as reflected in the table:

**Table 2. Main Jewish Traders from Barbastro**

Lineage	Member	Occupation
Abnuba	Abraham	Cattle dealer
	Menahem	Cattle dealer
	Simuel	Cattle dealer
Avincacez	Durán	Draper
	Haim	Draper
	Nicim	Draper
Avinsimuel	Bueno	Draper
Cofe	Astruch	Draper

37. ‘Merchant’ is generic word, used both in terms of the economic activities and the social status, which did not happen with “artisans”.

38. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1397, f. 5r.

39. “A notary protocol for Jewish merchants”. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1391, ff. 57v-83v and 1410, ff. 64r-73r.

40. Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. “Régimen jurídico de los contratos pecuarios suscritos en Jaca durante el siglo XV”, *XV Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón*. Saragossa: Departamento de Educación y Cultura-Gobierno de Aragón, 1994: 327-340.



Comparat	Baruch, major	Draper
	Baruch, minor	Draper
	Jucef	Draper
	Lop	Merchant
	Salamón	Draper
Sanoga	Jehudá	Cattle dealer
Yriza	Lop	Merchant

Among the liberal professions crimped in the privileged stratum, both for prestige and wealth, we find the “physicians”. One of them was Lop Comparat who haunted court circles.<sup>41</sup> The fact that four physicians practiced simultaneously medicine suggests that health praxis was hetero-confessional.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. A Lineage of Merchants: the Avincacez Family

One key of the Jewish mentality was the perception of the value of money. That particular insight turned Jews into a real bourgeoisie between aristocracy and peasants.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the *infanzones* [noblemen], who had secured a third of jobs as judges in the municipal government,<sup>44</sup> and the interrelationship between squires and citizens, after the increase of converts, would be substantially modified in favour of the latter because *nobleza no entraña riqueza* (“nobility does not imply wealth”).<sup>45</sup> In this sense, there are clear commonalities between their status in the social scale and their involvement in loans. Some examples are: merchants that sold on credit and invested their assets; small traders, qualified craftsmen and people with liberal professions that combined their jobs with the profitability of their benefits; and lower classes who also did it punctually by selling their products through small loans to consumers during the exhibitions/fairs periods.

Those families of *negotiators* were linked by marriage to seal alliances and allow the movement of goods among them through dowry. In a patriarchal society, daughters

41. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, Barbastro, 1395, ff. 16r-16v and 26r-26v.

42. McVaugh, Michael R. *Medicine before the plague. Practitioners and their patients in the Crown of Aragón, 1285-1345*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1993: 166-185.

43. Gutwirth, Eleazar. “Widows, artisans, and the ‘Issues of Life’: Hispano-Jewish bourgeois ideology”. *Iberia and Beyond; Hispanic Jews between Cultures*. Dover: University of Delaware Press, 1998: 146-147.

44. Gimeno Lorente, María Carmen. “El Concejo de Barbastro en la Baja Edad Media”. *Annales: Anuario del Centro de la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia de Barbastro*, 16 (2003): 27-67.

45. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. “La población de Barbastro...”: 125.



committed and signed betrothal at the age of thirteen or fourteen to formalize the marriage when they were eighteen or twenty years old. That fact guaranteed a fertility period of fifteen or twenty years, and an average progeny of four children.<sup>46</sup> It is important to remark that teen daughters were educated with other young girls from their same social status; that means that behavioural education was more relevant than the acquisition of knowledge.

I am going to analyze the profile of the three male members of the Avincacez family taking into account the period of their economic activities: Hayim (1390-1403), Nicim (1390-1413) and Durán (1400-1414). These three men were integrated in the system of monetary exchanges, based upon the handicraft production and the regional trade of raw materials.

### 4.1 Haym

He was the patriarch of the family. In early 1390, he was the witness in the payment of chivalry<sup>47</sup> tax. One of the transactions paid during the following year shows the effectiveness of Jewish inter mediation: the *sobrejuntero* deputy (officer of the court) ordered the merchant Bueno Avinsimuel a shipment of 22.5 cubits of mink cloth property of Pascual Casona to find the highest bidder. After auctioned it in the marketplace,<sup>48</sup> it was awarded to Haym Avincacez, which had bid 10 *sueldos* and 2 *dineros* (another monetary unit) per cubit.<sup>49</sup>

Haym also dealt with oil locally produced. The oil was used for food, but also sued by the textile industry. He joined in partnership to Jucef Comparat. In 1395, both of them leased a well of 150 *quintals* (weight unit: 100 lbs) to Salamón Taboch in order to store and redistribute it.<sup>50</sup> Thus, in 1401 he bought 14 *quintals* for 20 *sueldos* to a clergyman of the city. Haym agreed to receive the property once the olives were pressed by trusting in the harvest that the provider had in his mill and in two private homes.<sup>51</sup>

Another pillar of his business was the supply of common cloths to nearby villages, as in the sale of a “rag” to a neighbour of Buara (Alquézar) for the value of 30 *sueldos*.<sup>52</sup> The horizontal dual relationship is obvious in the appointment of prosecutors to defend Haym’s interests in court; for instance, in 1403 his business partner and one of his relatives,<sup>53</sup> Jucef Comparat and Durán Avincacez, were designated.

46. Motis, Miguel Ángel. “El linaje de los Santángel de Aragón...”: 283-287.

47. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1391, f. 84v and 1401, f. 2r.

48. Saucó Álvarez, María Teresa. “La plaza del mercado de Barbastro a finales del siglo XV. Una hipótesis de reconstrucción”. *Aragón en la Edad Media*, 19 (2006): 501-509.

49. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1391, ff. 84r-84v.

50. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1395, ff. 11v-12r.

51. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1401, ff. 2r-2v.

52. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1396, f. 35r.

53. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1403, f. 71r.



In 1401, Haym exercised as an *adelantado* (a title held by nobles) taking part in various payments (200 *sueldos* of annual tax census to Miguel Morlans, and 300 *sueldos* to a chaplaincy) responding with his property. For instance, once his goods were confiscated by the prosecutor of the bishop.<sup>54</sup> It was not the first time that he exercised as an *adelantado*: In this August 1392, he and Salamón Comparat delivered 266 *sueldos* 8 *dineros* that the community owed to the Queen's Treasure in concept of Royal Dinner and Interior Governing.<sup>55</sup>

On the occasion of his death around November 1405, we see that he was the father-in-law of Içach Comparat. His daughter's marriage linked Haym to one of the most influential people in his community. His son-in-law collected in his name some debts derived from the legacy that Haym left to his daughter. One example it is the debt of some neighbours from Ponzano who owed him 130 *sueldos con su ganancia, entro al present dia de huey*.<sup>56</sup>

From 1411, his executor, magister Salamón Coffe, perceived debts in Barbastro (100 *sueldos*) and Ilche (40 *sueldos*) with some difficulties. After more than a decade of a debt, Coffe had to proceed against third parties *como fiança qui erades en un contrato por carta publica debitoria*. It is interesting to note how arduous it was to prosecute the debts; for instance, the latter had to pay 23 *sueldos* for the legal costs.<sup>57</sup>

## 4.2 Nicim

His first appearance as a consignee of a legal business, not as a mere instrumental witness, dates back to 1391. In it, he was identified as a draper. He lent 60 *sueldos* to a neighbour of his city.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, he also traded with Baruch Comparat, not only with wheat but also barley. For instance, he sold 70 *cahíces* (an old Spanish customary unit of weight) of barley to the town of Ponzano. The sale was estimated at 1,000 *sueldos*, on whose invoice had to lay judicial conviction against the neighbours of Ponzano.<sup>59</sup>

Once again, horizontal partnerships were common. Hence, the loans arranged with Jucef, Lop and Baruch Comparat in nearby towns. Those loans did not usually exceed the amount of 100 *sueldos* (Ponzano, Pertusa, etc.).<sup>60</sup> This explains the disputes among them. Following the signature of *quinyan gamur*,<sup>61</sup> they had to entrust to several *arbitros arbitrades et amigables compondores*; among them, we find

54. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1401, f. 73r.

55. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1392, ff. 42r-42v.

56. "With its interest, until today". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1405, ff. 139v-140r.

57. "As deposit in a public notarized letter to reflect the debt". AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, ff. 20r y 32r-32v.

58. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1391, ff. 26v and 78v-79r.

59. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1413, f. 15r.

60. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1395, f. 5v and 1408, f. 29v; AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1413, f. 40v.

61. A Talmudic Law Institution equivalent to the *fianza foral* [regional deposit]. *Ruth*, 4:7.





the prestigious Içach Comparat.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, in small villages (Castejón de Sobrarbe, etc.)<sup>63</sup> common clothing were worked alongside with imported fabrics. The relevance of the Catalan, English and French trader was still limited at that time.<sup>64</sup> For instance, Bernardo de Limas from Barbastro purchased five cubits of clothing from London (approx. 4 meters), priced at 17 *sueldos* per cubit.<sup>65</sup>

Due to a financial credit, his economic power launched in the summer of 1399 when he delayed one month the payment that the juries of Barbastro should make for 1,000 *sueldos et aquellos no vos podamos a present pagar*.<sup>66</sup> It is clear that cash flow problems were common to councils and Jewish communities due to the raise of the tax levy.<sup>67</sup> Also, his ability to raise capital is stated in the aftermath of the Jewish presence. In the spring of 1414, he terminated, along with his shareholders Içach Comparat (magister Pedro de Santángel) and Baruch Comparat, a debt of 600 florins (ca. 8,700 *sueldos*), the largest amount registered in the checked sources, except for 172 florins that remained outstanding, probably because they resigned due to the imminent liquidation of the Jewry.<sup>68</sup>

**Table 3. Loans arranged by Nicim Avincacez**

Amount	Contracts		Value	
	Transactions	Percentage	Absolute value	Relative value
1 to 49 ss.	12	22.22 %	313.50 ss.	3.30 %
50 to 99 ss.	11	20.36 %	691.00 ss.	7.40 %
100 to 149 ss.	10	16.67 %	1,134.37 ss.	11.80 %
150 to 199 ss.	4	7.41 %	680.00 ss.	7.10 %
200 to 249 ss.	5	7.41 %	1,096.75 ss.	11.30 %
250 to 299 ss.	3	5.55 %	819.00 ss.	8.50 %

62. "Mediators and arbitrators". AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, f. 48v.

63. Castejón de Sobrarbe (Huesca). AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1395, f. 23v.

64. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel. "Pequeñas ciudades y grandes villas en el ordenamiento del espacio aragonés". *Les sociétés urbaines dans la France Méridionale et la Péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Age*, Burdeos: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1991: 47.

65. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1413, f. 3v.

66. "And those we can not pay today". AHPH, Monasterio de Sigena, S-27/21.

67. In the middle of the fifteenth century, several municipalities in Aragon renegotiated the interest rate down due to the size of its debt. Thus, the Council of Huesca in 1457, where the payment of pensions for the debt represented a third of its current expenses, managed to attract capital investments from of the Santángel family from Barbastro. Abella Samitier, Juan. "La deuda pública de los municipios aragoneses en los siglos XIV y XV". *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 39/1 (2009): 57.

68. AMB., Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, f. 14r.



300 to 349 ss.	1	1.85 %	300.00 ss.	3.10 %
350 to 399 ss.	3	5.55 %	1,143.60 ss.	11.80 %
400 to 449 ss.	3	5.55 %	1,220.00 ss.	12.60 %
450 to 499 ss.	--	--	--	--
> 500 ss.	4	7.41 %	2,222.50 ss.	23.10 %
Total	56	100.00 %	9,620.72 ss.	100.00 %

In July 1399, during his first term as an *adelantado*, he delegated to Haym Avincacez the payment of 63 *sueldos* and 8 *dineros* that the Jewish community had to pay to the chaplaincy of San Nicolás.<sup>69</sup> His prestige was evident in the meeting held in the synagogue in March 1407 where he received the treatment of *Don* (courtesy title) and occupied a prominent place in the list developed by the notary following the *adelantados* Lop Comparat and Salvat Pinoch, only preceded by Don Jucé Comparat.<sup>70</sup> His last intervention occupying that liability was in June 21<sup>st</sup> 1414. A week earlier, his counterpart magister Pedro de Santángel appointed him plenipotentiary attorney to settle the outstanding issues.<sup>71</sup> In name of the Jewish community, Nicim paid 1,000 *sueldos* to the Lord of the Castillo de la Roca<sup>72</sup> every four months. However, he also appeared regularly during several months for various reasons.<sup>73</sup> One of his performances during the spring of previous year shows internal tensions, such as insults by Jehuda Falcon against the magister Salamón Coffe (another *adelantado*) who was accused of being an ass; he was literally rebuked: *aguey beniz vos don rocín mesiellyo*.<sup>74</sup>

However, his trail reappeared in a document issued in December 1417, providing a vital key in his biography. It is an indictment issued by the squire Pedro de Miasén addressed to the last *adelantados* of the Jewry. Those *adelantados* were identified by with their Jewish and Christian *nomen* and *cognomen*: Anton Bardaxí<sup>75</sup> (Nicim Avincacez olim) and magister Pedro Santangel<sup>76</sup> (Içach Comparat olim). Shortly after his conversion, on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1415, the King Fernando I had

69. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1399, f. 62r.

70. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1407, f. 4r.

71. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, f. 3r.

72. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, ff. 31v-32r.

73. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, f. 1r; AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1414, f. 33v.

74. Popular expression of difficult translation equivalent to "you are an ass". AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, f. 1r.

75. He was not the only one with this name, which does not involve any kinship. People adopted their sponsors' name. For instance, in September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1414 the weaver Jaime Bardaxí challenged his Jewish wife Astruga to convert, receiving a negative response. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1414, f. 105v.

76. AMB, Protocolo de Pedro Garcés, 1417, f. 66v.



referred to his royal commissioners an *exhorto* (a requirement letter) to be paid all outstanding debts with no option for another extension.<sup>77</sup>

The Inquisitorial proceedings against Salvadora Salvat, widow of Antón Bardaxí, in 1489 have been kept. According to the chronology, Antón was Nicim's first-born child. Thus, Antón confessed that his father, that is Nicim Avincacez, told him about the birth of Jesus blasphemously: *le vino a decir e instruyr el dicho su padre a esta confesante como seyendo Josep, viejo, fuera de casa, vino hun ferrero a casa donde stava la Virgen Maria y se echo con ella y la enprenyo, y de alli nacio Ihesu Christo*.<sup>78</sup>

### 4.3 Durán

Durán's first biographical reference dates back to 1392.<sup>79</sup> He often acted as a witness in the documents issued by Haym,<sup>80</sup> so he remained in the background until 1401. Two years later, when he was twenty-five years old, he intervened in a deed, appointing *ad lites* Jucef Comparat and Haym Avincacez<sup>81</sup> as public attorneys. As the other members of his lineage, he also intervened in the *res publica* as an *adelantado* in 1406 by paying the 300 *sueudos* that the Jewry was taxed by Vicent of Arahuesc's chaplaincy.<sup>82</sup>

**Table 4. Loans Issued by Durán Avincacez**

Amount	Contracts		Value	
	Transactions	Percentage	Absolute value	Relative value
1 to 49 ss.	40	35.70%	1,296.2 ss.	15.37%
50 to 99 ss.	39	34.70%	2,456.43 ss.	29.12%
100 to 149 ss.	21	19.00%	2,407.1 ss.	28.53%
150 to 199 ss.	9	8.00%	1,597.8 ss.	18.93%

77. ACA, Real Cancillería, reg. 2389, ff. 47v-48r. Published by Escribá, Gemma. *The Tortosa Disputation: Regesta of documents from the Archivo de la Corona de Aragon, Fernando I, 1412-1416*. Jerusalem: Ginzei Am Olam, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, 1998: 149 (doc. No. 516).

78. "The father of this witness told her that Joseph, being an old man, and being away from home, a smith went to the house where the Virgin Mary lived and left her pregnant, and from where Jesus Christ was born". AHPovZ, Sección Inquisición, leg. 11, n. 1, ff. 8r-8v.

79. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1392, f. 49v.

80. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1401, f. 2v and 1403, ff. 119r and 128r.

81. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1403, f. 71r.

82. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1406, ff. 87v-88r.



200 to 249 ss.	3	2.60%	679.75 ss.	8.05%
Total	112	100.00%	8,435.28 ss.	100.00%

They were rare operations in which the loan was made in wheat, although the payment was made in kind. That fact allowed a wide margin by substantial speculative<sup>83</sup> swings in price.<sup>84</sup> Thus, in June 1403 close to the harvest period, he lent 10 bushels of wheat *bel, limpio et mercadero* to a neighbour of the city.<sup>85</sup> He also traded with oil, although to a lesser extent.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the agreed deadlines, repayment usually took several years, so interests were generated which proved the fragility of domestic and artisan economies, as we note in the partial payment made by Domingo Moriello in June 1411, an amount of 24 *sueldos* for a loan signed in December 1400, pending 20 *sueldos* that could be default interest.<sup>87</sup>

He often issued delivery notes specifying the different concepts. So, in May 1411 he received 196 *sueldos* from Miguel de Simón, neighbor of Monesma: 122 *sueldos como fiança en que erades*, 68 *sueldos por razon de la ganancia*, and 7 *sueldos por las missions*.<sup>88</sup> That year, he also formalized a similar deed to a couple from Castejón del Puente for 60 *sueldos*, *racione lucri duorum annorum cuiusdam contratus quo erant obligati eidem*.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, he proceeded with neighbors from Ilche: he received 100 *sueldos* from the loan, 50 *sueldos* from the interests and 12 *sueldos* from the legal costs.<sup>90</sup> Finally, in April 1413, he recognized that Luis Datín, inhabitant of Barbastro, had paid 20 of a 50 *sueldos* loan. From these examples, we see that debtors did not pay regularly, but when they had availability.<sup>91</sup>

His last transaction was submitted in April 1414. He perceived 50 *sueldos* from a neighbor of Adhuesca, including the interests of a debt amounting to 8 florins (77.5 *sueldos*), at a time when it was difficult to run the assets because of the decay of the Jewry.<sup>92</sup>

83. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1397, f. 21r.

84. The possibility of speculating on prices was accentuated. In 1414, depending on who realized the purchase, a *faneca* was fixed at 4 up 7,5 *sueldos*. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, ff. 5v-6r and 10r; Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1414, ff. 32v-33r.

85. "122 *sueldos* as guarantor, 68 *sueldos* on account of profit, and 7 *sueldos* for expenses". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1403, f. 90v.

86. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1403, f. 132r.

87. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, f. 38v.

88. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, ff. 29r-29v.

89. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, f. 9v.

90. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, f. 55r.

91. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1413, f. 14v.

92. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, ff. 21v-22r.



## 5. Final Considerations

Due to the weakness of many family economies and the fluctuating climate, a wide range of businesses required deferring payment. Consequently, loans were a vertebral factor in the socio-economic life of the city. That affected to farmers, artisans, merchants and institutions. The Avincacez family managed certain amount of capital, which allows us to analyze the common elements of their lending activity. Durán issued around 600-750 *sueldos* per year, with a total amount of 8,500 *sueldos*; Nicim issued about 400-550 *sueldos*, with a sum of about 9,500 *sueldos*; while Haym's activity was less significant.

In general, during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Jewish credit market was based primarily on the *carta debitoria* or *carta de deudo* ("a debit contract"): *con aquesta present carta publica a todos tiempos firme e valedera, confieso e en verdat mia reconozco que devo dar e pagar*.<sup>93</sup> That contract was prescriptible and was realized under oath *sobre los santos IIII<sup>o</sup> evangelios, corporalment por mi tocados*.<sup>94</sup> The contract had to show the loan without the interests and to observe a compliance with the statutory regulation of interests *ganancia o guanyo* ("benefit").

One of the most minted formulas was summarized like it follows: *los quales vos nos havedes emprastados, e van a coto e mandamiento del senyor rey del present dia adelant*.<sup>95</sup> However, in certain cases, the final computation started the same day that the letter was signed to finalize during the exhibition periods: *et si ultra terminum quod vadant ad cotum domini regis*.<sup>96</sup>

With the turn of the century, the *comanda* (customer request) took an important role. The *comanda* was a versatile and universal tool in business operations. In it, the borrowed amount and the interests agreed were specified—hence the fictional expression "pure and faithful deposit" or "pure cabal".<sup>97</sup> Therefore, it was easy to violate the law, and whose withdrawal depended only on the will of the two parties. In both cases, the interests computed while still being alive: *et van de huey adelant iuxta coto del fuero, tanto tiempo quanto yo aquell tendre*.<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, the numbers should be viewed with caution and seen as an indicator because there was a parallel accounting. There was not an interest to defraud because

93. "By virtue of this public deed, I confess that I have to pay you". AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, ff. 28v-29r and 1411-1412, f. 51v.

94. "I swear on the holy gospels that I take on my hands". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1412, f. 2r.

95. "Which you have lent me, according to the interest established in the *fueros* of Aragón". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1393, ff. 6r-6v; 1406, f. 8r; 1407, ff. 49v-50r and 1412, ff. 10r-10v; AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, f. 60r.

96. AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1411, ff. 28v-29r, 34v-35r and 1411-1412, f. 66v.

97. ACA, Diversos, Protocolo de Martín de Flandina, 1412, f. 32v; AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1405, f. 146v; 1412, ff. 61r, 86r-86v and 1414, ff. 35v-36r; Protocolo de Juan Fatás, Barbastro, 1411, f. 64v.

98. "Legal interests will be applied during the term of the contract". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1407, f. 119v; ACA, Diversos, Protocolo de Martín de Flandina, 1412, ff. 14v-15r.



the loaner had to pay tribute to the Jewish government under severe penalties.<sup>99</sup> Instead, there was a desire to restrict information circulating about their money transactions due to an increasingly unstable landscape. Usually the transactions lower than 25-30 *sueldos* were not recorded because they did not exceed “oral threshold”. The reason was due to the high cost of notarial tariffs or because they transcended the networks of kinship or neighborhood solidarity.<sup>100</sup> It is for this reason that the cancellation of debts alluded explicitly to verbal agreements: *assi con cartas como menos de cartas con scriptos como menos de scriptos, o en qualquier otra manera e razon*,<sup>101</sup> or they were cancelled generically: *cassando e annullando cualesquier albaran o albaranes por aquesta razon feytos and todas e cualesquier quantias de dineros que vos me deveessedes*.<sup>102</sup>

The members of the lineage were able to meet capital requirements of a range that extended thirteen kilometres around on average. Although in their customer list, we can find residents from fifty locations, a third of the business was mainly done in the city of Barbastro (32%). Then, we find second-range towns such as Salas Altas and Salas Bajas (7%), Permisán (3.5%) and Fornillos (3.5%), some of those with a few inhabitants. The Mudejar communities were very marginal in their transactions, except those in the Valle del Ebro, being the city of Saragossa the executive head.<sup>103</sup>

**Table 5. Main Localities of Credit Control of the Avincacez Family**

Locality	Kilometres	Fuegos	Durán	Nicim	Haym	Total	%
Azara	15	12	2	2	--	4	1.78%
Barbastro	-	455	50.5	16	6	72.5	32.20%
Buera	23	15	4	1	--	5	2.22%
Burceat	6.5	9	3	--	3	6	2.67%
Fornillos	11	16	5	3	--	8	3.56%

99. In Huesca by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, loans through a public letter were rated at 5 *dineros* per pound (2%) [Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. *Ordinaciones de la alcabala de la aljama judía de Huesca del año 1389*. Zaragoza: Editorial Anúbar, 1990: 19] whilst in Tarazona was fixed at 2 *dineros* per pound when subscribing the capital and 1 *dinero* when repaying it (1.25%). AHPT, Protocolo Bernat de Castellblanch, Tarazona, 1397, ff. 111r-111v.

100. Sesma Muñoz, José Ángel; Laliena Corbera, Carlos. “La población de Barbastro...”: 154.

101. “So with public deeds as without them, or in any other way”. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1397, ff. 16r-16v; 1406, ff. 80v-81r and 1408, f. 29v.

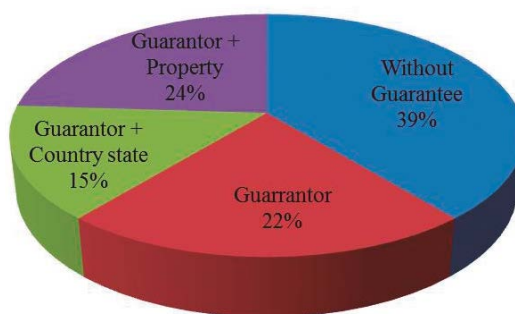
102. “Canceling any receipt I issued for this reason or any other amount of money you owed me”. AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1408, f. 42v-43r and 1410-11, f. 94r; AMB, Protocolo de Juan Fatás, 1414, f. 14r.

103. Motis, Miguel Angel. “Relaciones transversales entre judíos y mudéjares en Aragón...”: 101-127.



Illche	13	5	4	--	--	4	1.78%
Peralta de Alcolea	23	25	5	--	--	5	2.22%
Permisán	10	14	7	1	--	8	3.56%
Pozán de Vero	11	33	3.5	1	--	4.5	2.00%
Salas Altas	12	24	5	--	1	6	2.67%
Salas Bajas	10	31	7	3	--	10	4.44%

The Avincacez members were specialized in consumption loans as well as minor loans, though Haym also lent money to local corporations. Legislation established the level of this kind of loans minor than 200 *sueldos*, but indeed none of them exceeded that average: Haym (90 *sueldos*), Nicim (170 *sueldos*) and Durán (75 *sueldos*). The loans were issued with short-term liability; most of them were valid for a year or even less. Not surprisingly, many of their clients stated that requested borrowings *pora nuestros huebos e necesidades*.<sup>104</sup> Generally, those loans agreed in florins were the result of commercial transactions or raw materials purchases. Contrarily, the loan set in wheat or oil was for seeds or consumption. Moreover, we can appreciate significantly the profile of the debtor's diversity. In the graphic below, we find the case of Durán Avincacez. The required guarantees are shown to sign the contract, depending on both the amount and the recipient's estate.



GRAPH 1. GUARANTEES AND LENT DEPOSITS IN LOANS GRANTED BY DURÁN AVINCACEZ.

104. "In order to meet our needs". AHPH, Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1392, ff. 20v-21r, 1393, f. 15r; 1412, ff. 96v-97r and 1414, f. 28r.



One of the main catalysts for the credit flow was the exhibition periods. Barbastro had a fair during the feast of San Bartolomé since its concession in 1361 by King Pedro IV.<sup>105</sup> There were other fairs nearby: Monzón during the feast of San Mateo and Huesca<sup>106</sup> during the feasts of Corpus Christi and San Martin. Those three trade exhibitions defined a cycle where the economic activity was intensified. Both issuance and settlement moths (Easter, San Bartolomé and San Miguel) gave evidence of that.

**Table 6. Monthly Distribution of Issuance of Loans  
Arranged by the Avincacez Family**

Month	Durán	Nicim	Haym	Total	Percentage
January	8	7	4	19	9.90 %
February	9	7	1	17	8.90 %
March	8	4	4	16	8.40 %
April	10	6	1	17	8.90 %
May	8	7	--	15	7.80 %
June	15	5	--	20	10.50 %
July	3	--	1	4	2.10 %
August	7	5	--	12	6.30 %
September	8	5	1	14	7.30 %
October	11	6	4	21	11.00 %
November	10	5	1	16	8.40 %
December	18	1	1	20	10.50 %
Total	115	58	18	191	100,00 %

The 14<sup>th</sup> century crisis established the basis to adequate the productive and social structures in terms of wealth. In the commercial circles, the ethno-religious division

105. AMB, Sección Pergaminos, n. 3/5.

106. AHN, Sección Clero, Convento de Santo Domingo de Huesca, carpeta 602-19/1 y 2; AHPH, Protocolo de Jaime Berbegal, Huesca, 1389-1403, ff. 48r-48v; Protocolo de Domingo Ferrer, 1395, ff. 14v-15r; Protocolo de Juan de Azlor, 1397, ff. 17r, 30v, 32v-37r and 60v-62v; Protocolo de Sancho Soas, Huesca, 1398, f. 54v; Protocolo de Pedro de Ygüés, Huesca, 1396-99, ff. 64v-65v.



was irrelevant. However, the impact was not only economic.<sup>107</sup> It also established the foundations that contributed to transform the society through increased production, higher domestic consumption and the growth of new markets, allowing Barbastro to control the productive activities of lower ranking sites situated on its economic *hinterland* and to act as the center of a commercial crossroad<sup>108</sup> among the neighboring Jewish communities of Huesca, Fraga, Monzón and Sariñena.

To sum up, these oligarchies of merchants were omnipresent in the Jewry major decisions throughout *adelantados* and official receivers who were perpetuated through cooptation (Comparat, Sanoga, Gallipapa, Abnataboch, Abnuba, Cofe, Avinsimuel, Fraym and Abnaxech). Their objectives and profiles were shared with their counterparts in the other ethnic and religious communities at the same time. Moreover, these oligarchies traced the path of socio-economic transformation that took place in Barbastro during the last medieval century whose flow will be inherited by the converted Jews. Without them, it is impossible to understand their history.

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107. Sesma, José Ángel. "Pequeñas ciudades y grandes villas...": 133.

108. García de Cortázar, José Ángel. "Percepción, concepción y vivencia del espacio en el reino de Castilla". *I Semana de Estudios Medievales*, Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2001: 249.

